

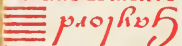


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WITH REFERENCE TO MATTER ATTRIBUTED TO

COLERIDGE AND SHAKESPEARE.

A LETTER

ADDRESSED TO "THE ATHENÆUM."

WITH A POSTSCRIPT

CONTAINING SOME REMARKS UPON

THE REFUSAL OF THAT JOURNAL TO PRINT IT.

SINCERUM EST NISI VAS ——— &c.

A Hint, from HORACE, on Cooking.

LONDON:

JOHN RUSSELL SMITH, SOHO-SQUARE.

1855.

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A M E R I C A.

A WRITER in "Notes and Queries" considers the name of our country faulty, because derived from the Italianized form of the German "Emmerich."

The latter is, however, evidently a contraction of the Gothic AIRMANAREIKS, which apparently signifies *Most Exalted* or *Universal Ruler*, and, when applied to a country, may likewise be rendered MOST SUBLIME DOMINION!

As regards its signification, therefore, the name "America" is more appropriate than "Columbia:" for, in the one case, we have only to wait till "this whole boundless continent is ours," but, in the other, until the lion shall lie down with the lamb; for we shall, I fear, hardly be *dovelike* before the millennium.

The Mæso-Gothic "Airmana" is the same as the old Saxon "Irmin" or "Irman" and the Anglo-Saxon "Eormin." "Reich" signified, anciently, both *power* and *dominiou*, as well as *one holding power*.

The name "Airmanareiks" was borne as early as the fourth century by a King of the Goths. In the course of ages it was gradually changed to "Armanarich," "Ermanarich," "Ermenrich," "Emmerich," &c.

B. H. D.

The true nature of this pamphlet was entirely misrepresented in the *ex parte* statement made in support of a rule for a criminal information against the publisher, moved for before the Judges of the Queen's Bench on the 16th inst., but refused by them.

It is not true that there is any *direct charge* contained in this pamphlet against Mr. Collier as to a surreptitious preparation of the "Marginal Corrections of Shakespeare:" such a charge would be absurd, because at present incapable of proof.

But it is stated in this pamphlet, that so long as certain facts, with respect to the preparation of another series of papers, remain unaccounted for, the unfavourable inference thereby created must extend to all Mr. Collier's productions in the same line.

These facts, although often complained of, had been suffered by Mr. Collier to remain before the public, *for upwards of a year*, unexplained and uncorrected, until the publication of this pamphlet: and they are shortly these:—

1. The reiterated assertion of impossible dates to several distinct documents.

2. The report of a portion of "*the third lecture*" after it had been twice most distinctly stated by Mr. Collier that no such report existed.

22D JANUARY, 1856.

INTRODUCTION.

IT is very much the fashion to cry down as unfair and unworthy of attention, charges preferred anonymously against known individuals; but although under certain circumstances they may deserve that character—where the charges are of a private nature, sustained only by the opinion or testimony of the accuser—yet there has always been a conventional and well understood exception where accusations are brought forward upon public grounds—against public individuals who by their own acts or from the nature of their functions are open to the criticism of all the world.

So long as the accusation is of public import, and so long as the acts animadverted upon are of public notoriety or accessible record, they are a fair and legitimate subject for an anonymous writer. He is merely the mouth-piece and proclaimer of those acts, and if the inference he would draw from them be unjust, there is a well

known reaction of generosity in the public mind that converts a pointless accusation into an increase of confidence.

If ever there was an individual who by his own act and assumption placed himself upon a pinnacle of public suspicion, it was Mr. J. P. Collier, when he took upon himself the triple capacity of discoverer—sponsor—and interpreter of the “Marginal Corrections” of the Text of Shakespeare.

By exacting for these corrections a consideration wholly due to their asserted antiquity, he converted them from matter of opinion into matter of faith and credibility—himself the witness: and if from that moment his public acts are subjected to cross-examination with a view to sift the value of his testimony, he must not be offended—the inconvenience is of his own infliction.

A LETTER
TO THE EDITOR OF THE ATHENÆUM
ON
LITERARY COOKERY.

THE *Athenæum* has so frequently and so fearlessly exposed the delinquencies of literary peculators—shewing up in parallel columns the spoiler and the spoiled, to the great amusement of its readers, and, it is to be hoped, to the discouragement of evil doers—that after such just severity towards simple larceny, it can scarcely desire to screen the graver offence, if not of downright forgery, at least of what may be described by that expressive phrase—“cooking.”

The charge on the present occasion needs no vouching; it is a *crimen sine teste probatum* the facts of which speak for themselves and require only simple inspection. A certain document, alleged to be in existence, either does or does not exist: if existing, it has been falsified; if not existing, the story of its discovery is untrue. It is a dilemma from which there is no escape.

Some time in last year Mr. J. P. Collier announced with great circumstance (in *Notes and Queries*, vol. X.) another of his “preposterous discoveries.”

He stated that it had very recently been his good fortune to “make a find” of his own original short-hand notes of Lectures on Shakespeare and Milton, “delivered by Coleridge so far back as the year 1812;” and that among

these notes he had also "luckily found" the original printed prospectus of the course.

Of that prospectus he then professed to give a literal copy, and its first sentence is this:—

"Mr. Coleridge will commence on Monday, November 18th (1812), a course"— &c.

Why the year should be enclosed in brackets does not appear—it might be to draw attention to it—but however that may be, the same date "*November 18, 1812,*" is afterwards forced into notice in a very extraordinary manner.

Not only is it expressly and pointedly confirmed by several extracts from the alleged contemporary notes, but the year 1812 is reiterated, in one shape or another, twelve or fourteen times in the course of the description; and there are two of these repetitions which impress the date with such remarkable emphasis, that no reasonable doubt can exist that for some purpose or another, the date was designedly enforced upon the reader's attention.

In one place Mr. Collier writes (alluding to his notes)—

"It is singular that I have not marked the date of the day when any lecture was delivered, excepting the first on Monday, Nov. 18, 1812."

And in another place, in a farewell admonition to his reader, he again insists that there must be no mistake about the date:—

"It will be borne in mind that all I have written belongs to the end of the year 1812, and the beginning of the year 1813."

Can any person then, even the most credulous, believe for an instant, that all this deliberate and apparently needless iteration is consistent with accident or inadvertence?

It must be recollected that a printed document was all the while before the writer's eyes, and that it is the date of that printed document that is so elaborately confirmed by the manuscript notes.

That two or three independent sources should concur in a mistake of such improbable occurrence as the date of the year in which they were respectively written and printed, is absolutely incredible.

But then another professed copy of this same prospectus has been long before the world in the "Life of Coleridge," by James Gillman, published in 1838. It is in every respect the same as Mr. Collier's, except the date, which in Mr. Gillman's reprint is—

"Monday, November 18, 1811."

Hence, with the same printed document before them, either Mr. Gillman or Mr. Collier must have altered the year.

But Mr. Gillman's date is possible and consistent, while Mr. Collier's is *impossible*; so that the only inference is, that Gillman's is the true copy: and Mr. Collier is left in this dilemma—either a document, which he alleged he had just found, was not in his possession at all, or if in his possession, it had been knowingly and intentionally altered to serve a purpose.

What that purpose may have been, it is, of course, impossible for another person to aver, but it must not merely on that account be doubted that the alteration was intentional, where evidence of design is so apparent: but if it should still be considered that the suggestion of some possible motive is essential to the completeness of the charge, the following hypothetical case might not be far wrong.

Supposing an ingenious person wished to confer upon certain MS. notes, purporting to have been written at such and such a time, an extraneous title to credit—and supposing that person had imbibed an idea that a new and more correct date might be ascribed to an occurrence which had hitherto been (as he might suppose) erroneously dated: there can be no doubt that if the new date could be supported, and the old date shown to be wrong, a very extraordinary presumption of truth would thereby accrue to the alleged

contemporary notes from which the new date might appear to be obtained.

Now, although the new date ascribed by Mr. Collier to Coleridge's lectures can *not* be sustained, because it is an impossible date, and inconsistent with itself, yet it by no means follows that the adopter of that date may not for a time have been led into an implicit though mistaken confidence in it.

Because the date "Monday, November 18, 1812," happens to be a correct and consistent date *according to old style*: so that all that is required to account for the whole affair, is the easy supposition that a person desirous of ascertaining a back date had got hold by mistake of *an old-style almanac!*

Now by a singular coincidence there happens to be a well known book of reference wherein old-style almanacs are attached to years of the present century.

And by a still more singular coincidence, it is the book of all others the most likely to be consulted by a writer in *Notes and Queries*, since it had been advertised and frequently alluded to in that publication, and editorially mentioned in terms of special recommendation for the "*ready test it affords as to accuracy of dates!*"

It is scarcely necessary to say that the book alluded to is De Morgan's "Book of Almanacs," wherein the first and most observable table of years extends to A.D. 1900, and is for old style.

A person, then, desirous of ascertaining a back date, and not very well up to the distinction between old and new style—or perhaps unobservant that the first table was exclusively for the former, might very easily and very unwittingly search therein for A.D. 1811 (with a view perhaps to verify Gillman's date of the Coleridge prospectus).

Running his eye along the columns of years he would come to A.D. 1811 in the penultimate column of page 3, with an annexed direction to *Almanac* 12. Here he would find the 18th of November attributed to *Saturday*, and he

would immediately rejoice in the fancied discovery that Gillman's date was wrong. He would then refer to the following year, 1812, and receiving a similar direction to *Almanac* 31, he would find the 18th of November therein set down to *Monday*. Whereupon, if not very conversant with chronology, he would naturally place the most implicit reliance upon "Monday, November 18, 1812," as a true and defensible date.

But whether this be or be not the true explanation of the delusion by which Mr. Collier's anomalous report of the Coleridge lectures was brought about, it is undoubtedly true that he has alleged the existence of a printed prospectus, bearing not only an impossible date, but a date differing from other published copies of the same document: and it is no less true that he has confirmed and supported that erroneous date by extracts from alleged private notes, purporting to have been written at the time, but, nevertheless, most unaccountably impressed with dates equally impossible.

Consequently the case, as against Mr. Collier, amounts to this :—

The printed prospectus, if it had the date of the year upon it at all, (and that it had, may be presumed from Gillman's verbatim copy) must have been originally impressed "1811."

If this had been altered to 1812 *previously* to coming into Mr. Collier's possession, such an alteration *in a printed document* must have been apparent, and ought to have excited investigation and remark.

When, therefore, Mr. Collier is found silently quoting it as "1812," that circumstance is of itself suspicious; but when 1812 is again corroborated by private notes and memoranda, for which Mr. Collier is alone responsible, the inference is irresistible that the dates of both prospectus and notes had a common origin, and were subjected to one common self-convicting blunder.

All this may seem slight and unimportant, but it almost

invariably happens, that it is precisely by such ill-considered trifles that deception is betrayed and unmasked. What reader of Miss Edgeworth's tale of "Patronage" but must recollect the venerable and white-headed old man who is suborned to testify to the false will? There has been an old defaced sixpence enclosed within the seal, and the old man is to swear that he saw it placed there many years before when the will was sealed. The cause is on the point of being decided in favour of the forgers—the old man seems so thoroughly respectable in his mildness and grey hairs that not a breath against his truth will be listened to:—but the old witness is so enamoured of the clever device of the sixpence, and has got himself so well up in the story relating to it, that he is loth to relinquish it—he stoops down to his counsel and whispers that the sixpence has been forgotten—thereupon the seal is broken, the coin is found just as described, and the old man's triumph is for a while complete. But alas! the acute counsel on the opposite side has at length succeeded in decyphering the date upon the coin, and, to the utter confusion of the forgers, it proves to be long subsequent to the alleged date of the will.

Verily, chronology is a useful servant, but a most dangerous accomplice!

But it must not be imagined that all this trouble would have been taken merely for the purpose of proving that Mr. Collier must have tampered with the Coleridge prospectus. Certainly not: the object in view is far higher and more important.

It is to rescue the outraged spirit of Shakespeare from the incubus of those "marginal corrections," which, to the shame of the nineteenth century, have been permitted, like the unclean birds of old, to settle down upon his text, tearing and mangling, and befouling where they could not destroy.

There is a strong family resemblance between the *discovery* of these marginal corrections and the *find* of the Coleridge notes: but, unfortunately for the ends of justice,

the edge-tool of chronology was not meddled with in the former case, so that the same sort of direct proof could not be brought against it as is now shown to be so fatally damaging to the *notes*.

There are some persons whose minds are so constituted that nothing short of direct and undeniable proof of dishonesty in the witness will induce to admit the possibility of his deceiving them—the more especially if the witness be what is considered “competent authority.”

The presumption—the plagiarism—the vulgarity—the imbecility—of those wretched libels on the text of Shakespeare were as nothing to convince of their imposture; but had the prestige of their sponsor being less—had they really been dependent solely on their own merits—they would have been at once cried to scorn.

To dispel that prestige, by laying bare the taint of CONTRIVANCE, is the real object of this exposure; if the scent now opened be effectively followed up, it may, perhaps, at length extort a second confession, similar to Ireland's, of Shakespearean forgeries.

The *Athenæum*, although it was soon left far behind by more enthusiastic admirers of the *marginal corrections*, was the first to “stamp the leasing” with the currency of its approval. Will it now assist in undoing the mischief? Will it, at the least, give publicity to this impeachment? The name of SHAKESPEARE ought to be as sacred an appeal to all true adherents, as that of the Sovereign to all loyal subjects, for aid and furtherance to

A DETECTIVE.

3RD OCTOBER, 1855.

POSTSCRIPT.

THE foregoing letter was sent to the Editor of the *Athenæum* on the 3d of this month, accompanied by a note to the following effect:—

“This letter is sent to the *Athenæum* for publication under this condition: that if published at all, it shall be intact and entire, without addition or curtailment.

“Should this condition not be complied with, or should publication be altogether refused, it is the writer’s intention to have the letter immediately printed for diffusion through the post-office.”

To this an answer appeared in the *Athenæum* of the 6th, as follows:—

“A DETECTIVE is declined. His manuscript is left for him at our office. The insertion of the year within a parenthesis is a clear intimation that it was *not* printed on the document from which the writer was copying, and therefore was conjectural: Detective’s comment is therefore a mere waste of words.”

The Editor doubtless thought that this dictum would quite settle the matter, and leave “A Detective” in a predicament, to exclaim with Charles, in the “Elder Brother”—
“*My head is broken with a parenthesis.*”

But the parenthesis which encloses the year in Mr. Collier’s copy of the Coleridge prospectus is not, by any means, such a plain proof as the Editor of the *Athenæum* would assume, that there was no year printed in the original document; especially in the face of the direct evidence to the contrary afforded by Mr. Gillman’s reprint. (*Life of Coleridge*, vol. I. p. 262.) In that reprint there is no parenthesis, nor any other indication that the year had been an addition of Mr. Gillman’s own.

Besides, even in Mr. Collier's version, the manner in which the parenthesis is inserted, within an including comma, and with no break in the quotation-marks, is certainly much more indicative of a singling out (by brackets) for the purpose of future comment, than of the intrusion of new matter extraneous to the original.

But admitting that the fact is as the Editor of the *Athenæum* assumes, and that there really was no year printed in the original prospectus, how does that alter the complexion of the manœuvre? It merely changes the *modus operandi* from substitution to interpolation. The charge is that the prospectus is *altered*, and the Editor of the *Athenæum* seems to forget that alteration may be effected as well by interlopation as by substitution. *Is it not, in fact, an altered document as it stands?*

The statement of Mr. Collier was, that certain long lost notes—short-hand notes—had been found, which, when all written out, “extend to from ten to forty sides of letter-paper for each lecture;” that is, to sufficient for the manufacture of an octavo volume of matter to be attributed to Coleridge. The date of these notes is asserted in the most positive and unequivocal manner; and is apparently confirmed by a printed document found with them, but mis-quoted with the addition of a fictitious, or, as the Editor of the *Athenæum* delicately terms it, a *conjectural* date to suit. If not as a corroborative, why was this date added at all? Mr. Collier was repeating the year 1812 in almost every sentence of his own remarks upon the subject; where, then, could be the necessity of introducing it surreptitiously into a professed *verbatim* copy of another document, in contradiction to the date that had previously been attributed to that document?

But there was a third mutual corroborative, which also turned up at the same time, in the shape of a journal or diary, in which every thing seems to be fragmentary, excepting the various dates: they are perfect enough, and all

concur in supporting this same date which we are now to look upon as merely conjectural. Nay, this diary is so precise that it gives the date of an allusion by Coleridge himself to another series of lectures delivered by him *the preceding year*. (?)

“Coleridge himself mentioned them in a conversation at my father’s on the 21st October, 1812. It was on the same occasion that he announced to us his intention of giving the lectures, of seven of which I have notes, and which commenced on the 18th Nov. following.”

But the Editor of the *Athenæum* now assumes that the date of the year common to all these documents was conjectural! *Conjecture* implies doubt, and if Mr. Collier really wished to verify his date there was a ready means of so doing by a glance at *obvious* sources of information, such as Gillman’s Life of Coleridge, or the Coleridge Lectures, in both of which the very prospectus he was copying is to be found.

It is almost incredible that any person would sit down to write matter to be attributed to Coleridge, and yet omit to consult at least the indexes of previous collections. Or was it *with intention* that Mr. Collier apparently provokes the inference that he had done so? It is difficult to banish such a suspicion, when he is found reprinting the well known prospectus of 1818 with this preliminary remark:—

“As I cannot find that the prospectus of Coleridge’s lectures in 1818, (they began on 27th January, and finished on 13th March,) was ever reprinted, and as I happen to know that it cost him no little trouble and reflection, I venture, though it is somewhat long, to subjoin the introduction to what is called the syllabus of the course,” &c.

Ever reprinted! Why it occupies a conspicuous place in the “Remains,” published in 1836;—it is reprinted at length in the “Life,” published in 1838;—and it is the very first article in the 2d vol. of the “Lectures,” published in 1849, being an obvious and indispensable portion of the lectures themselves.

One, at least, of these books Mr. Collier appears to be acquainted with; since he quotes it, volume and page, in his

Notes and Emendations: and yet the expression "cannot find" would seem to imply a search; and if so, surely the books just enumerated are precisely those in which a search would be made.

But it is singular that this should be the second time that Mr. Collier considered it necessary to make the same disavowal. In a previous part of his communication he had said:—

"I had carefully preserved Coleridge's printed 'Prospectus' of his lectures in 1818 (I know not if it has been reprinted)," &c.

By the way, there certainly is a word peculiar to Mr. Collier's copy of this Prospectus of 1818, which *does* distinguish it from other versions, viz. :—

"The acquisitions and attainments of the intellect ought, indeed, to hold a very inferior rank in our estimation, opposed to moral worth, or even to professional and scientific skill, prudence, and industry." (Reprint in *Notes and Queries*, vol. x. p. 22.)

The word *scientific*, in all reprints save this of Mr. Collier's, is printed *specific*; and it is needless to say, that all other reprints are unquestionably right: but perhaps this may be an *emendation*!—it has, indeed, a wondrous smack of the *Old Corrector*—

*Although the print be little, the whole matter
And copy of the father—*

But to return to the lectures of "1812"—there is another circumstance, perhaps of not much importance in itself, but significant in aggravation of the other discrepencies in these revelations.

Mr. Collier states that he had recovered his notes of seven out of the fifteen lectures which constituted the course: and these seven he enumerates as "the first, second, sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth, and twelfth."

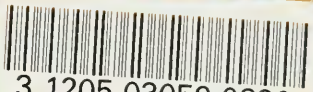
And yet, in the very next page to this enumeration, we read—

"These were the concluding words of Coleridge's second lecture. In his third he thus"—&c.

And then follows half a page of matter, reported in the first person, as though taken down from the lips of Coleridge, whose THIRD lecture was *not* one of those of which the notes had been so fortunately recovered.

But if ever there was positive assertion, untinctured by the slightest appearance of doubt, hesitation, or conjecture, it assuredly is the assertion by Mr. Collier of every particular relative to his alleged date of Coleridge's Lectures "of 1812." A DETECTIVE cannot therefore agree with the Editor of the *Athenæum*, that it is "a mere waste of words" to draw public attention to the impossibility of that date, and consequently to the extreme improbability of its having been obtained from any *bonâ fide* or really contemporary source; and, as a corollary to that conclusion, that no faith ought to be placed in any other antiquities that may have been issued from the same laboratory.

10TH OCTOBER, 1855.



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